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C O N F I D E N T I A L

BUCHAREST 00031

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DISSEMINATION: POL

CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:JDCROUCH

DRAFTED: POL:RG; CP

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0015

INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0044

RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BUCHAREST 000031

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STATE DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH

STATE DEPT ALSO FOR INR/B

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/05/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#) [UP](#) [IZ](#) [RO](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

UNGUREANU AND DEFENSE MINISTER ATANASIU

REF: A. STATE 187 (AND PREVIOUS)

[1](#)B. 04 BUCHAREST 3551

Classified By: Ambassador Jack Dyer Crouch II for Reasons 1.4 B and D

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador January 3-4 made introductory calls on new Foreign Minister Razvan Ungureanu and new Defense Minister Teodor Atanasiu. Echoing a prominent theme in President Traian Basescu's electoral campaign, both incoming ministers expressed a firm commitment to a strong relationship with the U.S. Ungureanu described the center-right governing coalition as "heterogeneous," but expected the current cabinet to remain for at least 18 months. Atanasiu said the GOR would need to examine whether to "increase or decrease" its overseas deployments, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the specific issue of UN Force Protection in Iraq, Atanasiu stated that an infantry company is "ready" for deployment but that UN funds available for salary support are insufficient; he promised to provide soon detailed information about Romanian needs for salary support (Refs) End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Following the December 28 parliamentary confirmation of Romania's new government, the Ambassador met January 3-4 with Foreign Minister Mihai Razvan Ungureanu and Defense Minister Teodor Atanasiu. Both ministers noted they were still becoming acclimated to their new positions. Both also said that over the next two weeks they would be preoccupied with filling key slots at the sub-ministerial level to ensure the presence of "strong staffs" they felt confident would support the new government's direction.

FM Ungureanu: "Washington-London-Bucharest"

[1](#)3. (C) FM Ungureanu emphasized to the Ambassador in his January 3 meeting that President Basescu and the new PNL-PD led government placed strong ties with Washington at the top of Romania's foreign policy priorities. Ungureanu noted that while Basescu had spoken frequently of a "Washington-London-Bucharest axis" throughout the presidential campaign, the inclusion of "London" was intended primarily to present a balanced approach to the EU. Ungureanu said the U.S. would find in him, personally, a very frank and open interlocutor. He expressed that his previous experience as a State Secretary at the MFA during the 1996-2000 center-right government and his previous experience with the Stability Pact had prepared him well for his new job.

Politics of the Coalition

14. (C) Ungureanu also provided insight on the political mechanics of the new government, characterizing the governing coalition as "heterogeneous" but assessing that the current cabinet would remain "untouched" for at least 18 months. He boiled it down to the fact that few MPs want new elections. He similarly described what he called the new core foreign policy team -- himself, PM Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, and Presidential Counselor Andrei Plesu -- as a melting pot. "Plesu is German trained; Tariceanu is French trained; and I am British trained," but, he reiterated, one common denominator was their "commitment to strong relationship with U.S." The Ambassador asked about the role of the three new Ministers of State, de facto Vice Premiers, in this government. Ungureanu said that while each had been assigned broad portfolios and ostensibly would be responsible for sets of ministries, in reality their positions were largely for a political purpose: to tie together the coalition. The PM is from the National Liberal Party; and the Ministers of State come from the ethnic Hungarian (UDMR), Humanist (PUR), and Democratic (PD) parties. All four would be able to carry the government's program back to the parliament and ensure support.

15. (C) The Ambassador asked Ungureanu how he predicted the Social Democratic Party (PSD) would behave in opposition. Ungureanu agreed the PSD would likely be tough but he had "few doubts" there would be any major differences over foreign policy: "We both want good relations with the U.S. and EU accession in 2007." He said that this was despite the fact that the government does not have a majority on either of the foreign affairs committees in the Parliament. Ungureanu said the PSD would likely pick its differences over social or economic policies, notably health care or aspects of economic liberalization.

Moldova, Ukraine, Russia

16. (C) On politics in the region, Ungureanu opined that Moldova "could become a problem." Romania would be watching March elections closely. Ungureanu said President Basescu had spoken with Ukrainian President-elect Yushchenko and that he, himself, knows many in Yushchenko's inner-circle. He expressed a "bit of worry" that possible PM Iulia Tymoshenko could make relations difficult -- leaders may continue to use issues with Romania like the Bystroe Canal and Snake Island to rouse nationalist sentiments. The Ambassador stressed that Romania should seek to focus relations on cooperation. Ungureanu agreed, but qualifying that Romania could not "leave room" for unwarranted concessions. He said the new Romanian government realizes the potential for Romania, on eastern edge of the EU and NATO, to play a role building possible bridges with Kiev and even Moscow. However, with regard to Russia, Ungureanu said he was "personally" concerned about Russian intentions inside and outside its borders, asserting that "few in power there are truly interested in reform."

17. (C) Ungureanu said Romania was eagerly awaiting a decision on possible U.S. military basing in Romania. "An announcement could not come too soon." He saw "absolutely no difference" on the positions of the previous government or the new one on "this fundamental issue."

Defmin Atanasiu: A Strong Strategic Partnership

18. (C) Ambassador met with Defense Minister Teodor Atanasiu January 4 in his office at the Defense Ministry. Speaking through an interpreter, Atanasiu began the meeting by observing that President Traian Basescu and PM Calin Popescu Tariceanu have both stressed the importance of "strengthening the U.S.-Romanian strategic partnership." Atanasiu stated that the Romanian "military will play a key role" in this process, noting that "our intention and goal is to build an all-volunteer, professional armed forces by 2007." Ambassador expressed support for Romania's ongoing defense reform and stated that he and his team are working hard to assure that cooperation between the U.S. and Romania remains solid.

19. (C) Atanasiu observed that Romania will "continue cooperation with the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Balkans." He stated that discussions over the next several months should examine how Romania should proceed in regard to its overseas deployments. Romania must decide whether to "increase or decrease" its overseas deployments and also needs to explore which "partnership forums should be developed." (Note: Mihaela Matei, the head of the MOD's Strategic Affairs Directorate, told DATT in an earlier meeting that press reports had misquoted Atanasiu and erroneously quoted him as stating that when the mandate of Romanian troops in Afghanistan and Iraq expires in Summer 2005, he would prefer to send only specialized intelligence units (Ref B). Matei explained that Atanasiu had meant to

express that the GOR would explore with the U.S. the appropriate "mix" of forces deployed so that Romania's resources, including intelligence units, could be best employed. End Note.)

UN Force Protection in Iraq

110. (C) On the subject of the Romanian offer of one infantry company for UN force protection in Iraq (Refs), Atanasiu observed that the company is "ready" but that the GOR does not have "budget allocations" for 2005 to sustain salary costs for the company during an overseas deployment. Further, UN funds for salary allocations "provide about half, or less" than Romanian law requires for salary support for overseas deployments of this nature. He promised to provide an "exact calculus" soon of the funds GOR needs to cover salary costs. Ambassador observed that it would be difficult for the UN to pay more for salary support for Romanian troops than for troops from other nations, also noting that U.S. law forbids payment of salaries to foreign troops. (Note: Post will report Septel when it receives the MOD's "exact calculus." End Note.)

The Black Sea and regional security

111. (C) In general terms, Atanasiu observed that the Black Sea region and Caucasus region are of key strategic importance for both Romania and the U.S. Ambassador stated that the U.S. shares the GOR's goal of enhancing Black Sea security, underscoring the importance of initially focusing on concrete projects rather than prematurely attempting to address grand regional themes. Ambassador also stressed strong U.S. support for the development of democratic institutions in Ukraine and Moldova, observing that Romania - and NATO - can play a role in this process.

112. (C) Atanasiu said he would like to meet again with the Ambassador in early February, stating also that he hopes to visit the U.S. in the latter half of 2005 "once he has learned his brief." Ambassador stated that when the visit dates have been set he would help arrange meetings with Secretary Rumsfeld and other appropriate interlocutors.

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113. (C) Comment: Both ministers were stark contrasts to their predecessors. The straight-speaking and understated Ungureanu differed remarkably from former FM Geoana. In contrast to ebullient ex-DefMin Pascu, who conducted his meetings with Embassy interlocutors in fluent, idiomatic English and encouraged a "give and take" exchange of information, Atanasiu proceeded cautiously and spoke through a translator (although his curriculum vitae describes him as an English speaker). Atanasiu's approach may reflect the fact that he is still getting his sea legs: Although Atanasiu has been a longstanding leader of the National Liberal Party (PNL) in Transylvania, he possesses scant prior experience in central government and only limited background in the defense sector, having managed an arms factory for several years. End Comment.

114. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website:
www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest
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